Amendment to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

       generating a first unique identifier (UID);

       transmitting from a first client to a previously known address of a second client, via an electronic mail protocol, a first electronic mail (e-mail) message comprising the first UID, wherein the electronic mail protocol comprises a mail server operating the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP);

       receiving from the second client, via the electronic mail protocol, a second e-mail message directed to the first client comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID;

       verifying the copy of the first UID is identical to the first UID at the first client; and

       transmitting from the first client to the previously known address of the second client, via the electronic mail protocol, a third e-mail message to the second client comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the first message further comprises the digital object.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the third message further comprises the digital object.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 4 wherein the second message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 6 (canceled).

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim wherein at least a portion of the electronic mail protocol operates securely using the Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the first UID contains at least 128 bits.

Claim 9 (currently amended): A method for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

receiving from a first client, via an electronic mail protocol, a first electronic mail (e-mail) message comprising a first unique identifier (UID), wherein the electronic mail protocol comprises a mail server operating the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP);

generating a second UID at a second client;

transmitting from the second client to a previously known address of the first client, via the electronic mail protocol, a second e-mail message comprising the second UID and a copy of the first UID;

verifying the copy of the first UID is identical to the first UID at the first client; and

receiving from the second client, via the electronic mail protocol, a third e-mail message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages received further comprises the digital object.

Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 9 wherein the first message further comprises the digital object.

Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 9 wherein the third message further comprises the digital object.

Claim 12 (original): The method of claim 9 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 12 wherein the second electronic mail message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 14 (canceled).

Claim 15 (original): The method of claim 9 wherein at least a portion of the electronic mail protocol operates securely using the Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol.

Claim 16 (original): The method of claim 9 wherein the first UID contains at least 128 bits.

Claim 17 (currently amended): A computer-readable medium including computer-executable instructions facilitating authenticating a sender of a digital object, computer-executable instructions executing the steps of:

    generating a first unique identifier (UID);

    transmitting from a first client to a previously known address of a second client, via an electronic mail protocol, a first electronic mail (e-mail) message comprising the first UID, wherein the electronic mail protocol comprises a mail server operating the Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP);

    receiving from the second client, via the electronic mail protocol, a second e-mail message directed to the first client comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID;

    verifying the copy of the first UID is identical to the first UID at the first client; and

    transmitting from the first client to the previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a third e-mail message to the second client comprising a copy of the second UID;

    wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.

Claim 18 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 17 wherein the digital object is a public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 19 (original): The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein the second message further comprises a second public key for a cryptographic system.

Claim 20 (currently amended): An apparatus for authenticating the sender of a digital object, comprising:

a random number generator generating a first unique identifier (UID);

a network interface transmitting to a previously known address, via an electronic mail (e-mail) protocol, a first e-mail message comprising the first UID;

the network interface receiving, via the electronic mail protocol, a second e-mail message comprising a second UID and a copy of the first UID, wherein the copy of the first UID and the first UID is compared for verification; and

the network interface transmitting to the previously known address, via the electronic mail protocol, a third e-mail message comprising a copy of the second UID;

wherein at least one of the messages transmitted to the previously known address further comprises the digital object.